

Melissa M. Edlund

PA8921 - Independent Professional Paper

Spring 2015

MPA Professional Paper:

Analysis of the Parent Aware Curriculum Rating Tool and Priority Indicator Research Briefs

Executive Statement

The findings in this paper discuss the Minnesota Office of Early Learning's (OEL) Leadership Team goals for characteristics of the criteria required of Parent Aware approved curricula and how the goals align with the Parent Aware Rating Tool used to determine approval of a curricula being used in a Parent Aware-Rated early childhood programs. Findings suggest that the criteria required of Parent Aware-eligible curricula do not strongly align with all of the targeted characteristics of the curricula, specifically criteria that are responsive to children's diverse cultural backgrounds; recommendations are made to improve the Rating Tool so that it is more likely to be responsive, appropriate and sensitive to cultural differences.

Background

Many Minnesota children are not adequately prepared academically, socially, and emotionally, to start kindergarten. When children start kindergarten underprepared, they fall behind and most do not catch up. The high number of students unprepared for kindergarten in Minnesota has become an increasing concern by many parents and has resulted in parents seeking out high-quality childcare and preschools that can fully prepare their child for kindergarten. In doing so, parents shop around for the best care for their child, however many are often faced with barriers to understanding which type of care will work best for their child and for their family circumstances and location of residence. Additionally, parents struggle to identify kindergarten-readiness best practices.

As a result the Minnesota organization, Parent Aware, a Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) was established to help parents find providers in their area using kindergarten-ready best practices and

to guide parent choices by using a 4-star rating system that is easy to understand. Parent Aware allows parents to use search results to find the best Parent Aware provider for their child taking into account preferences for location. An *Assessing Quality Checklist* is also offered to guide parents on how to thoughtfully choose a provider. Some of the indicators that parents can use when choosing a provider are: caring and positive relationship between provider and child, teacher training, group size, environment, planned activity, tracking of child development, respectful of unique family backgrounds, and communication/sharing of information.

Parent Aware's Star-Rating program is voluntary and is optional to early childcare and preschool providers in Minnesota. Participating programs receive a rating of one, two, three or four stars, which are based on demonstrated use of practices that best prepare children for kindergarten. Each rating builds on the next, helping families easily identify how far a program has progressed in adopting these practices.

Paper Summary

This paper discusses the findings of an evaluation on the Parent Aware Rating Tool Indicators for the required criteria of Parent Aware curriculum used in early childcare settings in Minnesota. The objective of this paper is to determine whether or not the Parent Aware Indicator Review Tool accurately reflects the needs of Minnesota's youngest children who receive care outside of the home. Findings focus on the method for rating curricula and the identification of recommendations to modify the Parent Aware Rating Tool so that the tool more strongly aligns with the priorities of the OEL Leadership Team for early childcare curricula, specifically the priority to be responsive, appropriate and sensitive to cultural differences. Culture influences all aspects of child development; it is transformative and encompasses everything in a person's environment—including language, communication, beliefs, customs, practices, interactions, relationships, and behaviors. The development of babies and toddlers is rooted within a cultural context, as are the early care practices of parents and caregivers.¹

The discussion includes: 1) a summary of curriculum reviews performed and, 2) research brief findings in the context of Parent Aware goals and the priorities of the OEL Leadership Team. The curricula evaluated are nominated by Parent Aware candidates using the criteria described in the Parent Aware

¹ Hannah Matthews. (2008.) *Supporting a Diverse and Culturally Competent Workforce: Charting Progress for Babies in Child Care Research-Based Rationale*. Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), Washington, DC.

Guide to the Curriculum Review Process. The research resources used were selected by Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) staff.

Nationwide Perspective on QRIS

More than half of states now have Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) in some stage of development—operational, recently launched, or piloted. These systems have two primary goals:

- One goal is to improve child outcomes across a range of early care and education settings (center-based including Head Start and pre-kindergarten as well as family child care, including licensed family child care and legally exempt family, friend, and neighbor care) by encouraging providers to meet higher standards related to higher quality.
- Another primary goal is to help parents choose arrangements that meet their needs based on the quality ratings that programs have achieved.

The conversation concerning the importance of high-quality early childhood education has grown more complex – encompassing not only defining the determinants of program quality but also linking these determinants to child outcomes. Research has linked high-quality early childhood education to “better cognitive function and language development” for young children - and in later years higher rates of attendance at a four-year college, and higher rates of employment.²

While all states vary in their measurement approach, all include metrics of teacher qualifications, most include a global measure of classroom quality examining the physical environment, health and safety practices, materials and activities, teacher interactions and daily program structure and some include measures of leadership, classroom ratios and how well programs partner with families. These are all important aspects of quality, but they do not necessarily include particular aspects of quality related to race, gender, language, and culture.³ A review of a state’s QRIS is one step in developing a quality early childhood system that is responsive to issues of race, gender, language and culture.

² NAEYC. Quality Benchmark for Cultural Competence Project Summary Statement.
http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/policy/state/QBCC_Tool.pdf

³ Charles Bruner, Aisha Ray, Michelle Stover Wright and Abby Copeman. (2009.) *Quality Rating Improvement Systems for a Multi-Ethnic Society*. Retrieved from:
<http://www.buildinitiative.org/WhatsNew/ViewArticle/tabid/96/smId/412/ArticleID/181/Default.aspx>.

QRIS's today are not perfect in what they try to measure, but they are stimulating actions within programs to change and improve practice. Adding a specific component related to language, culture, race, and gender could further thinking and practice and influence other system elements.⁴

The Curriculum Review Process and Research Strategy

The research used for the research briefs was selected by Department of Human Services (DHS) staff as relevant information on research topics related to early childhood development and that are significant in the context of Minnesota's state policies for early childhood development and the current needs of Minnesota's children and families that participate in early childhood programs. Research Briefs were drafted and reviewed with edits from DHS staff. Findings of the research will be shared with DHS and MDE staff on the Parent Aware Indicator Review Team/OEL to inform the team of research-informed strategies that are possible options for strengthening the Parent Aware Rating Tool.

Curriculum Reviews

The OEL leadership team is the group of management staff that collaborates on the programs that were included in the Race-to-the-Top Early Learning Challenge Grant: Parent Aware, Early Learning Scholarships, Early Learning Services at Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), and Child Care Health Consultants at the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). Team members include:

DHS: Deb Swenson-Klatt, Mary Orr

MDE: Bobbie Burnham, Barbara O'Sullivan, Lisa Barnidge, Lisa Backer

MDH: Janet Olstad

For the focus of developing the Parent Aware QRIS tool, this team has assigned a Parent Aware Curriculum Review Committee made up of individuals from the Department of Human Resources (DHS) and Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), whom hold bi-weekly meetings throughout the year to review nominated curricula for early childhood programs. The nominated curricula are proposed by the publisher of the curriculum or by the early childhood program that would like to use the curriculum. In order to qualify as a Parent Aware provider, the curriculum the provider uses must be approved by Parent Aware and meet the criteria established within the indicators.

⁴ Charles Bruner, Aisha Ray, Michelle Stover Wright and Abby Copeman. (2009.) *Quality Rating Improvement Systems for a Multi-Ethnic Society*. Retrieved from: <http://www.buildinitiative.org/WhatsNew/ViewArticle/tabid/96/smId/412/ArticleID/181/Default.aspx>.

The Curriculum Review Process requires a thorough examination of the published curriculum that has been nominated. Curricula often include items such as: a Curriculum Guide that includes educational theories and research of early childhood development of which the curriculum philosophy is based, learning goals and objectives for children ages 0-5, a Teacher Guide on daily activities to be carried out, lesson planning, and parent engagement activities.

Required criteria must meet the eligible criteria to qualify as meeting expectations of the Parent Aware rating, and a justification must be included stating the extent to which the curriculum meets eligible criteria. A rubric scoring is then given based on the extent of which there is evidence that the curriculum meets eligible criteria. The rubric scoring is on a scale of 0-2, with zero being that the curriculum does not meet any of the eligible criteria; a score of one implies that the curriculum meets some of the eligible criteria, and a score of two implies that the curriculum meets all of the eligible criteria.

Requirements for each curriculum are as follows⁵:

- Research basis or philosophy statement that describes how children learn and how teachers teach
- Goals and objectives of children's learning
- Information about the setting and environment in which learning happens
- Instructional approaches used to help children achieve the goals and objectives
- One example of young children's learning experiences for each domain in the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress

Suggested Criteria requirements that are *not* required:

- Provisions for including families
- Sequence
- Developmentally appropriate materials
- General approach (appropriate balance of teacher-directed and child-directed activities)
- Provision for different types of learning experiences (individual, small group, and large group, learning centers, "hands-on" learning experiences and learning during routines and transitions)

⁵ An example of a completed curriculum and types of materials that would qualify for each Curriculum Requirement are listed in the Appendix – Item A.1.

- Guidance on adult-child interaction, including behavior management
- Guidance on adapting/refining to serve children of differing developmental levels or abilities
- Guidance on adapting/refining to serve children who are English language learners
- Guidance for using instructional assessment information in curriculum planning process

If a curriculum being reviewed meets the five required criteria, but it does not pass the nine optional criteria, it most likely will still be approved to be used as a Parent Aware curriculum.

One aspect of qualification is that curriculum materials meet eligibility for the goals and objectives of children's learning if the curriculum can demonstrate that it is comprehensive of the domains in the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress. The Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs) for Minnesota's early learning standards establish developmentally appropriate expectations for what children should know and be able to do at certain ages. The ECIPs offer common language for assessing progress and supporting children and families. Minnesota is currently in the process of updating the birth through kindergarten entrance standards in the areas of: language, literacy, and communication, and social and emotional development. These updates are not included in this study.

Exact alignment of early childhood curriculum to the ECIPs are not required, however in the review process the goals and objectives were highly significant in the determination of whether or not a curriculum reasonably included goals and objectives for each domain. The domains are separated according to children's ages – one set is for birth to age three, and another is for age three to kindergarten entry.

For infants and toddlers, domains are as follows:

- Social and Emotional Development
- Language Development and Communication
- Cognitive Development
- Physical and Motor Development

For preschoolers, domains are as follows:

- Social and Emotional Development
- Approaches to Learning

- Language and Literacy Development
- Creativity and the Arts
- Cognitive Development
- Physical and Motor Development

For curricula for infants and toddlers, four examples are required, one for each of the domains. For curricula for preschoolers six examples are required, one for each of the domains.

As the Parent Aware quality rating system expands in Minnesota, the OEL Leadership Team is working to maintain its usability and alignment within the context of Minnesota’s early childhood environment. In doing so, the team has established criteria for changing, removing, or adding an indicator to the Parent Aware rating tool. The criteria for changing, removing or adding an indicator is as follows:

1. Does it strengthen our indicator set to achieve a “few and powerful” tool?
2. Does it improve variation (allowing there to be some programs at every rating level) or otherwise help us better differentiate quality?
3. Does it help advance a state policy priority, including 3rd grade reading proficiency, pre-k to 3 alignment, and health standards in Caring for Our Children?
4. Will it help embed cultural responsiveness, appropriateness and sensitivity into to the rating process?
5. Does it improve transparency in the ratings for parents?

The expected characteristics of indicators identified by the OEL leadership Team are:

1. Is likely to result in positive child outcomes, especially for children with high-needs , based on research or professional judgment
2. Builds on Minnesota’s Essential Elements and existing program standards included in Head Start, School Readiness, Early Childhood Special Education, Accreditation, and Licensing
3. Aligns with or incorporates Minnesota’s Early Learning Standards and Knowledge and Competency Framework
4. Is responsive, appropriate and sensitive to cultural differences
5. Is written in plain language and is clear and meaningful to early learning programs and families.
6. Is observable, documentable and valid.

Research Brief:

The research briefs fulfill the Office of Early Learning (OEL) Leadership Team objective to explore limited options for strengthening the Parent Aware Rating Tool using the criteria for changing an indicator, within the context of the priorities established by the OEL Leadership Team.⁶

The discussion in this paper focuses on the research in the priority area of cultural responsiveness, appropriateness and sensitivity.⁷ This priority area was chosen in response to the comprehension and observed weaknesses of the Parent Aware Curriculum review rating tool. The OEL Leadership team has received concerns from stakeholders that the rating process is not culturally responsive, appropriate or sensitive enough to children and their families that receive services from early childcare and learning programs participating in Parent Aware. The team seeks to explore how to more widely embed culture within the indicators while still giving programs the flexibility they need to carry out best practices in a way that is culturally appropriate so that it is meaningful to them.

Findings: How Well Does the Parent Aware Indicator Review Tool Align with the diverse needs of Minnesota Children?

The Parent Aware Indicator Rating Tool⁸ is a method for understanding and measuring how well an Early Childhood curriculum meets Parent Aware criteria. The tool includes a range of measures, including cultural responsiveness, appropriateness, and sensitivity, of which the research in this evaluation specifically focuses on. Research shows that it is important for caregivers to: 1) understand the value of connecting to children through their home culture, 2) understand in what way they can best connect to children through their home culture, and 3) understand the significance of linguistic background in the process of children's language development so that they are able to provide appropriate support and nurture development in the context of each child's unique cultural background. According to the cultural characteristics expected of indicators on the Parent Aware Indicator Rating Tool, findings from this research show that the required criteria of Parent Aware curricula does not strongly align with these characteristics and does not indicate that sensitivity to children's diverse cultural differences is a high priority.

⁶ The six priority areas are: the structure of the rating tool, observations of child-provider interactions, cultural responsiveness, appropriateness and sensitivity, the appropriate use and application of health measures in early childhood settings, the incorporation of kindergarten transition measures, and training indicators of staff.

⁷ See copy of Cultural Responsiveness Research Brief in Appendix - Item A.2.

⁸ See Appendix – Item A.1 for an example of the Parent Aware Indicator Rating Tool.

Findings establish the following recommendations:

1. It is suggested that the OEL Leadership Team revise the indicators to better reflect the needs of children with diverse backgrounds so that caregivers are more likely to understand the value of connecting to children through their diverse home culture.
2. It is suggested that the OEL Leadership Team consider revising the indicators to better reflect the needs of children with diverse backgrounds so that it is more likely for caregivers to have understanding of how to connect to children through their diverse home culture.
3. It is suggested that the OEL Leadership Team consider revising the indicators to better reflect the needs of children with diverse linguistic backgrounds so that it is more likely for caregivers to understand the significance of linguistic background in the process of children's' language development.
4. It is suggested that the OEL Leadership Team consider modifying these criteria to include levels of scoring broader than the basic range of 0-2 so that the scoring can better reflect how well a curriculum meets requirements of the ECIPs domains.

First, research shows that it is important for caregivers to understand the value of connecting to children through their home culture so that they are able to support and nurture development in the context of each child's unique background. While it is often believed that the development of children has greater benefits when they share an ethnic background with their caregiver, these circumstances are not always possible. An alternative approach to this is that the caregiver takes positive actions with the unique differences of children by being aware and responding to cultural differences with positivity and creative strategies that promote all children's learning. A publication by the Center for Law and Social Policy found that an ethnic match between a young child and a caregiver is not related to social and cognitive outcomes for children; rather, high-quality care—care that is sensitive and responsive to the individual child—benefits all young children, regardless of the ethnic background of the person providing that care.⁹

Childcare providers' understand the value of connecting to children through their home culture aligns with the OEL Team expected indicator characteristic of providing care that is responsive, appropriate

⁹ Hannah Matthews. (2008.) *Supporting a Diverse and Culturally Competent Workforce: Charting Progress for Babies in Child Care Research-Based Rationale*. Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), Washington, DC.

and sensitive to cultural differences. In regards to the required criteria of eligible curriculum, this aspect does not reflect a high priority in the Curriculum Review tool. According to the Curriculum Review tool, the criteria that are likely to influence teaching with sensitivity to culture are not required. The optional criteria that curriculum *should* include – guidance on adapting/refining to serve children who are English language learners, guidance on adapting/refining to serve children of differing developmental levels or abilities, developmentally appropriate materials, and provisions for including families, are several criteria that have strong relation to a child and his or her family’s unique background and any unique needs of that child that may require adaptation of instruction. Yet these criteria are an *option* and therefore do not require that a provider meet these conditions.

Second, it is important for caregivers to understand how to connect to children through their home culture. According to the definition in *Roots and Wings*, “cultural relevance” means that the caregiver routines, teaching strategies and curriculum match the child’s home culture.¹⁰ Culturally responsive programs share three components:

1. Curriculum is based on children’s daily lives
2. Activities incorporate children’s home language
3. Activities encourage children to learn about their family and home culture

These three components align with the OEL Leadership Team's expected indicator characteristic of providing care that is responsive, appropriate and sensitive to cultural differences. According to the required criteria of eligible curriculum, this aspect does not reflect a high priority in the Curriculum Review tool.

According to the Curriculum Review tool, the criteria that are likely to influence teaching with sensitivity to culture are not required. The criteria that would align with these components are – provisions for including families, developmentally appropriate materials, guidance on adapting/refining to serve children of differing developmental levels or abilities, and guidance on adapting/refining to serve children who are English language learners.

Specifically, the Curriculum Review tool defines "developmentally appropriate" activities as, “activities that vary with and adapt to the age, experience, interests, and abilities of individual children”. In the perspective of cultural relevance, the ability of the teacher to approach individual children and connect

¹⁰ Stacey York. (2003.) *Roots and Wings: Affirming Culture in Early Childhood Programs*. Redleaf Press, St. Paul, MN.

to them through their home culture or language, which would include adapting to the experience, interests and abilities of individual children. However, the requirement to meet this criteria in order to be approved as a Parent Aware curriculum is optional.

Third, it is important for caregivers to understand the significance of linguistic background in the process of children's language development. Language is important in all aspects of the development of the child – social relationships, cultural identity, cognitive development, and reflects varying levels of social-political power. Additionally, learning a second language is highly dependent on having a high skill level in the first language. James Cummins, one of the most important researchers in the area of bilingualism, defines bilingual competence as having two components that includes basic communication skills in their home language such as pronunciation, reading and writing, and language development in that language that goes beyond communication skills, including math and other subjects such as science. While second language learners are learning English, they still need to receive content instruction in their first language so they can master the deep cognitive levels of the second language.¹¹ Further, approaches to teach children English who speak a language other than English without supporting the home language, results in weakening of the child's cognitive, language and social abilities.

Quality programs that serve children who are English-language learners as well as English-only children build upon the assets of having children and families speaking other languages at home in developing both teaching and play opportunities that involve these other languages.

These components align with the OEL Team expected indicator characteristic of providing care that is responsive, appropriate and sensitive to cultural differences. In regards to the required criteria of eligible curriculum, this aspect does not reflect a high priority in the Curriculum Review tool. According to the Curriculum Review tool, the criteria that are likely to influence teaching with sensitivity to culture are not required. The criteria that would align with these components are – provisions for including families, developmentally appropriate materials, guidance on adapting/refining to serve children of differing developmental levels or abilities, and guidance on adapting/refining to serve children who are English language learners. Yet these criteria are an *option* and therefore do not require that a provider meet these conditions.

¹¹ Stacey York. (2003.) *Roots and Wings: Affirming Culture in Early Childhood Programs*. Redleaf Press, St. Paul, MN.

Lastly, a separate issue the OEL Leadership Team is working to strengthen is to better differentiate quality (see number 2 on page 7 - criteria for changing, removing or adding an indicator). When performing curriculum reviews, the criteria require that the curriculum reasonably included goals and objectives for each domain of the various ages of children served. For curricula for infants and toddlers, the requirement was that four examples are available in the curriculum materials, one for each of the domains. For curricula for preschoolers, the requirement was that six examples are available in the curriculum materials, one for each of the domains. This format for meeting requirements was insubstantial for the reason that there were often inconsistencies in the type and frequency of domain components presented in each curriculum. Some of the curricula exhibit a robust capacity to deliver learning methods in all of the required ECIPs domains, providing examples several times throughout a program's daily activities listed for a month's time. Others, however, provided only a few examples of the domains throughout a month's duration. Yet, both types of curriculum are eligible to meet the requirements of the criteria.

Conclusion

This analysis of Parent Aware Curriculum Reviews and Parent Aware Rating Tool, and the research on cultural responsiveness in early childhood programs, suggest that increasing the emphasis on cultural awareness and sensitivity of Parent Aware indicators would address the needs of many families and their children whom receive care outside of the home. Today, 44 percent of all children in the U.S. are members of "minority groups." By 2050, the proportion will be 62 percent.¹²

The growing diversity of young children in Minnesota and nationwide increasingly requires that early childhood programs are equipped to support and engage with these children to meet all of their developmental needs. As Minnesota's QRIS program, Parent Aware provides a policy lever of quality enhancement that could likely increase the cultural responsiveness, appropriateness, and sensitivity of providers to each child's unique ethnic and cultural background.

Additionally, states are increasingly viewing QRIS as a mechanism to engage centers and family child care homes in training and staff development activities and curricula implementation linked to rating

¹² NAEYC. (2009.) *Where We Stand: On responding to linguistic and cultural diversity*.

components with the goal of overall improvement in the care and education provided.¹³ As states mature in their QRIS development and implementation, QRIS are increasingly being seen as a framework for a larger early childhood system. *Therefore, ensuring that QRIS place value on including issues of race, language and culture has importance to the cultural and language responsiveness of the larger system.*

A 2008 study by the Child and Family Policy Center (CFPC) found that most state QRIS systems do not include significant culturally- and linguistically-competent responses to race, language, and culture as an aspect of program quality. The study found that respondents' lack of knowledge of the relationship between cultural competence and quality programs, confusion about what is desirable, uncertainty of goals for incorporating culture in curriculum, influences of different accreditation bodies, and political contexts, are some barriers to including cultural components in QRIS.¹⁴ It is essential that in moving forward, the OEL Leadership team and other early education leaders in Minnesota examine these types of barriers and work to overcome them to ensure that the state's QRIS system, Parent Aware, is part of an overall set of policies, regulations, and practices that supports high-quality learning and gives express attention to issues of race, language, and culture.

Aside from these recommendations to the Curriculum Review/Parent Aware Indicator Tool, it is understood that although a curriculum that offers adequate cultural responsiveness, appropriateness, and sensitivity is being utilized, the actual *practices* of the provider may not offer the level of positive connection, respect and security required to support a child with a diverse cultural background. A separate study focused on the issue of changing the beliefs and behaviors of providers would offer more insight into this issue. Additionally, these improvements to the Indicator Tool are likely to incur costs to childcare providers, which could create a barrier to becoming Parent Aware-Rated. It is suggested that further research be done to gain understanding of how these changes may affect providers.

¹³ Charles Bruner, Aisha Ray, Michelle Stover Wright and Abby Copeman. (2009.) *Quality Rating Improvement Systems for a Multi-Ethnic Society*. Retrieved from:

<http://www.buildinitiative.org/WhatsNew/ViewArticle/tabid/96/smId/412/ArticleID/181/Default.aspx>.

¹⁴ Charles Bruner, Aisha Ray, Michelle Stover Wright and Abby Copeman. (2009.) *Quality Rating Improvement Systems for a Multi-Ethnic Society*. Retrieved from:

<http://www.buildinitiative.org/WhatsNew/ViewArticle/tabid/96/smId/412/ArticleID/181/Default.aspx>.

APPENDIX A.1

Curriculum Approval Process

This form tracks the review process for child care/early learning programs going through Parent Aware curriculum approval process.

Three types of curriculum eligible for review:	What type of curriculum is being reviewed and for what age group?	What specific curriculum is being reviewed?	Has a copy of the curriculum and supporting materials been received?
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Comprehensive, published curricula2) Comprehensive, site-designed curricula3) A bundle of curricula. These include multiple curricula that, when reviewed together, are comprehensive of the domains in the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress.	<p>Comprehensive, site-designed curricula</p> <p>Designed for mixed age group</p>	Fireflies (2014) – Funshine Express (August Issue)	Yes. Online materials also used.

REQUIRED CRITERIA

Requirements	Eligible Criteria	To what extent does curriculum meet requirements with eligible criteria?	Rubric Scoring: Evidence Provided to Meet Requirements 0 = meets none 1 = meets some 2 = meets all
<p>Research basis or philosophy statement that describes how children learn and how teachers teach</p> <p>Definition: This is a description of the theory, approach, philosophy, and/or research the curriculum is based on.</p>	<p>Types of materials that would qualify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section in a published curriculum manual • Short written statement • Book, or chapter from a book • Handout from a training <p>Is the statement clearly written?</p> <p>Does it include references to generally accepted early learning approaches, child development theorists and/or research?</p>	<p>The Curriculum Guide states that program goals are based on current research and sound educational theories of early childhood learning and development, yet does not contain specific reference to any research.</p> <p>Access to a statement of philosophy and research can be found on the publisher website, which states that “preschool activities that align with best practices can foster creativity, as well as promote emotional, cognitive, social, and physical development. Developmentally</p>	1

Original research is <i>not</i> required.		<p>appropriate activities can also build self-esteem and enthusiasm for learning. The adult's role is to support children's interests and learning needs".</p> <p>Statement includes specific references to: Maslow, Piaget, Vygotsky, and Erikson.</p>	
<p>Goals and objectives of children's learning</p> <p>Definition: A list of the things the program wants children to know and be able to do</p>	<p>Types of materials that would qualify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section from a published curriculum manual • Developmental chart • The Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs) <p>The Minnesota ECIPs may be used as the goals and objectives of your curriculum. If you are using them as the goals and objectives for your curriculum, include a copy of the cover page of the ECIPs for each age you serve.</p> <p>Are the goals and objectives "comprehensive" of the domains in the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress? In other</p>	<p>Fireflies Curriculum Guide contains a list of learning goals and objectives with areas of focus including: math, creative art expression, science, language/literacy, social/emotional, social studies, and physical development/health.</p> <p>Scope and sequence is comprehensive of the domains of ECIPs and has list of skills within each of the abovementioned areas. (See insert after p.28 of Fireflies Curriculum Guide)</p> <p>Specific learning goals are also provided for daily activities (see p.16 of Fireflies Curriculum Guide for example).</p>	2

	words, does it include goals and objectives for each of the domains in the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress? Note that exact alignment is not required, but your goals and objectives will be reviewed to determine if there is reasonable inclusion of goals and objectives for each domain.		
Information about the setting and environment in which learning happens Definition: A description of the features of your learning environment	Types of materials that would qualify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section from a published curriculum manual • Description of how you arrange the environment • Information about the materials needed for particular activities. • Book, or chapter of a book • Sketch of the room's layout • Photos of the features of your learning environment. Is the arrangement of the environment clearly described? Does the environment include	Includes brief suggestions for how to organize the environment for learning and play (p. 7), but does not specifically address all of the domains in the Minnesota ECIPs. Arrangement of the environment is not clearly described. Materials listed for daily activities and to be used in the environment address all domains of the ECIPs.	0

	sufficient materials to address all of the domains in the Minnesota ECIPs?		
Instructional approaches used to help children achieve the goals and objectives Definition: A description of how to plan engaging learning experiences for young children, including how to conduct lesson planning and use daily schedules	Types of materials that would qualify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson plan form(s) • Daily schedule form(s) • Section in a published curriculum manual • Short written statement • Book, or chapter from a book • Handout from a training Is the description clearly written? Do the lesson planning and daily schedule forms connect to the goals and objectives?	Several activities are listed in the Curriculum Guide for use as daily lessons. The activities include references to goals and objectives. Daily schedules are not provided with the list of daily activities. A short written statement suggests to use consistency and a predictable routine for activities.	1
One example of young children's learning experiences for each domain in the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress	Types of materials that would qualify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section(s) from a published curriculum manual • Short written statements for each domain in each of the ECIPs • Book, or chapter from a book, describing 	Examples found throughout Curriculum Guide. Social & Emotional - Activity objective to develop the self-concept component (point to the Character Critters and ask the children to recall the positive characteristics of each. Ask how these traits can be important characteristics for people to have, for example use questions such as, "When would it be	2

	<p>activities you carry out in your program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handout(s) from training(s) <p>For curricula for infants and toddlers, four examples are required, one for each of the following domains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and Emotional Development • Language Development and Communication • Cognitive Development • Physical and Motor Development <p>For curricula for preschoolers, six examples are required, one for each of the following domains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and Emotional Development • Approaches to Learning • Language and Literacy Development • Creativity and the Arts • Cognitive Development • Physical and Motor Development 	<p>helpful to be logical?"; p. 15)</p> <p>Approaches to Learning – Activity objective to develop the imagination component (Give each child a piece of clay and invite the children to form their clay into bugs. Encourage them to be imaginative – it may be a real bug or a special bug of their own; p. 27)</p> <p>Language & Literacy - Activity objective to develop the emergent reading component (Read a fiction story about bugs to the children from the book list. When you are finished reading, ask the children to recall what happened in the story using questions such as, "And then what happened?"; p. 31)</p> <p>Creativity and the Arts - Activity objective to develop the creating component (Have the children decorate an oversize chair with silk flowers, flower stickers and pictures to transform it into a bee's habitat. Provide back and yellow clothes for the children to dress up as bees and encourage them to buzz around the beehive; p. 23)</p> <p>Cognitive - Activity objective to develop the number concepts component (Review the number 16</p>	
--	--	--	--

		<p>with the number 16 counting card.</p> <p>Invite the children to find sixteen small items in your setting, and place them on the sixteen dragonflies on the card; p. 22)</p> <p>Physical & Motor - Activity objective to develop the gross motor component (Gather the children outside and challenge them in groups of three to form letters with their bodies standing up or lying on the ground; p. 36)</p>	
--	--	--	--

OPTIONAL CRITERIA

Curriculum <i>should</i> include	Questions to consider when developing or choosing curriculum:	To what extent does tool meet optional criteria?	Rubric Scoring: Evidence Provided to Meet Optional Criteria 0 = meets none 1 = meets some 2 = meets all
Provisions for including families	<p>Did you embed the following items in the lesson design (home follow-up ideas; items to discuss) and/or suggestions about at home or family activities, on site family activities (i.e., activity nights) and/or resources/guidance for teachers?</p> <p>What connections are made between lessons and children's family experiences? Are there explicit home follow-up ideas?</p> <p>How are parents'</p>	<p>Program goal states that it will encourage involvement of family members in each child's learning.</p> <p>Curriculum guide for August 2014 mentions specific parent participation in one activity for the entire month. Few connections are made between lessons and children's family experiences.</p> <p>No explicit home follow-up ideas.</p> <p>Guiding principles briefly suggest consultation with parents on any allergies/sensitivities for new multisensory activities.</p>	0

	interests, concerns or resources included or represented?		
Sequence Definition: Sequence is the order in which various activities/topics are presented to children within a curriculum. A curriculum's sequence should provide a continuum of skills from beginner to emerging to mastery/proficiency.	Do skills build on or "scaffold" on each other? Do the materials include guidance for teachers on how adults should plan for skills across ages? Does the curriculum articulate a sequence and, if so, is the sequence logical? Is there a clear way to gauge children's progress and a description of the skills and knowledge that should be expected to come next? Does the curriculum clearly explain how teachers would use data from their observations of individual children to plan activities?	Curriculum Guide briefly discusses "scaffolding". Activities in this curriculum encourage children to work together, share, and be successful at their individual skill level. Themes used in the curriculum are presented in a continuum (e.g. "Beautiful Bugs", the theme for August 1-15, provides daily activities building on the theme using activities such as: discussing the names of insects in English and then Spanish, creating bug paint prints, and sorting and creating patterns with plastic bugs by color or characteristic). Some lesson includes	2

		<p>suggestions for differentiating instruction for different levels (accommodations for younger children or children with different developmental levels).</p> <p>Curriculum guide references two online tools: Observation Summary and a Progress Checklist of learning goals and objectives.</p>	
<p>Developmentally appropriate materials</p> <p>Definition: Developmentally appropriate activities vary with and adapt to the age, experience, interests, and abilities of individual children.</p>	<p>Do the materials fit the age range of the children? Are they adaptable?</p> <p>Does the curriculum include guidance for using open-ended materials that children can use for play-based learning?</p> <p>The majority of activities should not include worksheets and teacher-modeled activities in</p>	<p>Materials are suitable for preschool and adaptable for different levels within this age range.</p> <p>Includes open-ended activities and materials and could be used to facilitate play-based learning. (see Curriculum description, p. 5)</p> <p>Majority of activities are not worksheets or teacher-modeled.</p>	2

	which children have little or no ability to be creative.		
General approach (appropriate balance of teacher-directed and child-directed activities)	<p>Is there a balance of both teacher-directed and child-directed or “child-initiated” learning indicated in the written materials?</p> <p>Do the examples of activities provided demonstrate a good mix of both?</p>	<p>There is a balance of teacher and child learning activities within the examples (see activity for The Very Quiet Cricket on p. 17).</p> <p>Directions provide many suggestions for telling children what to do but there is some room for child creativity within the activities.</p>	2
Provision for different types of learning experiences (individual, small group, and large group, learning centers, “hands-on” learning experiences and learning during routines)	<p>Are different types of experiences listed in the written materials? Are particular activities matched with different types of learning? Is there a good mix?</p> <p>Are there examples of how routines and transitions are used as learning experiences?</p> <p>Are there examples of</p>	<p>Learning experiences are varied among activities and provide different types of learning (e.g. “Jumping Bugs” activity focuses on number sequencing and measurement, as well as gross motor movement, p. 17).</p> <p>Curriculum Guide emphasizes the importance of consistent</p>	1

and transitions)	different types of experiences provided?	<p>and predictable routines for children's learning (p. 5), but gives no examples.</p> <p>No transition examples.</p> <p>Activities help children have a range of different experiences (e.g. focus on science objective provides "sink or float" activity with water and various materials, p.45, and focus on social studies objective provides "literary field trip" to local library, p. 41, etc).</p>	
Guidance on adult-child interaction, including behavior management	<p>Are there suggested follow-up questions to group/small group activities?</p> <p>Is there guidance about how teachers follow/adapt to children's interests (either as a group or individual children)? Is there guidance on</p>	<p>Most activities list questions for teachers to ask children during large and small group.</p> <p>Not specifically listed for most activities. Implied in activities that allow children to decide what they would like to draw, pretend to be, etc.</p>	1

	<p>interactions/conversations with individual children?</p> <p>Is there guidance on arranging the environment to reduce stresses that could lead to behavior management issues/problems?</p>	<p>Curriculum Guide provides suggestions on organizing the environment to accommodate exploration, meet needs, and make the days flow smoothly, p. 7.</p> <p>.</p>	
<p>Guidance on adapting/refining to serve children of differing developmental levels or abilities</p> <p>Definition: Materials that describe how to adapt or refine instruction for children with differing developmental levels or abilities.</p>	<p>Often, written materials claim to be “for a wide range of abilities.” How is this actually demonstrated in the materials?</p> <p>Are there specific suggestions about how to adapt materials to serve children at different levels? For example, is there guidance for how to adapt activities for children who are ahead of the other children in the class, or children who are struggling with the materials or who have developmental delays?</p>	<p>Some activities provide an “adaptation” technique to decrease difficulty of activities based on child need.</p> <p>No adaptation provided for children who are ahead of the class.</p>	1

Guidance on adapting/refining to serve children who are English language learners Definition: Materials that describe how to adapt or refine instruction for children who speak another language at home and are learning English.	Are there specific suggestions about how to adapt materials to serve children learning English as a second language? Does guidance show respect for children's home languages when they are different from the primary language in the classroom? Does the curriculum include resources or suggestions for incorporating children's home languages into the classroom? Does the curriculum provide materials in other languages?	No information on guiding English language learners. No specific information on integrating children's home languages. Some sign language and Spanish diagrams are offered for vocabulary, letters and numbers.	0
Guidance for using instructional assessment information in curriculum planning	Is there guidance about how teachers follow/adapt to children's interests and ability levels using observations of children?	No specific instructional assessment or guidance for using an assessment provided. Brochure does not mention how	0

process Definition: Materials that describe how to use assessment results to plan meaningful instruction.		assessment helps guide individual instruction.	
--	--	--	--

Questions

Call or email for information regarding the Parent Aware curriculum review process to:

Michelle Lenhart

Minnesota Department of Human Services

Child Development Services

(651) 431-3871

PO Box 64962

St Paul, MN 55164-0962

APPENDIX A.2

Minnesota's Commitment to Research-Informed Policy and Practice

Minnesota Office of Early Learning

Cultural Responsiveness, Appropriateness, and Sensitivity
of Early Childhood Programs

May 2015

1. Stacey York. (2003.) *Roots and Wings: Affirming Culture in Early Childhood Programs*. Redleaf Press, St. Paul, MN.

A) This book provides a resource of theories and best practices for implementing culturally relevant and anti-bias education with young children. Cultural relevance means that the caregiver routines, teaching strategies and curriculum match the child's home culture. Culturally responsive programs share three components:

- Curriculum is based on children's daily lives
- Activities incorporate children's home language
- Activities encourage children to learn about their family and home culture¹⁵

B) Research suggests that people who are bilingual are more flexible and creative in their thinking and use of language. (p.88) Language is important in all aspects of the development of the child – social relationships, cultural identity, cognitive development, and has varying levels of social-political power.

Children typically pass through similar stages of development, regardless of which language they are learning. Bilingual children's language development follows the same progression as that of monolingual children. According to a study at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, children learning English as a second language pass through a developmental sequence while learning a second language. Through this process, it is common for children to blend their two languages, such as using a word in Spanish while speaking a sentence in English. This sophisticated language skill called **code switching**, plays an important role in communicating and maintaining ones cultural identity. Code switching can be confusing to monolingual teachers and can be mistakenly seen as a sign of poor language skills.

C) Learning a second language is highly dependent on having a high skill level in the first language. James Cummins, one of the most important researchers in the area of bilingualism, defines bilingual competence as having two components that includes basic communication skills in their home language such as pronunciation, reading and writing, and language development in that language that goes beyond communication skills, including math and other subjects such as science. While second

¹⁵ Page 73. York, Stacey. (2003.) *Roots and Wings*. Redleaf Press, St. Paul, MN.

language learners are learning English, they still need to receive content instruction in their first language so they can master the deep cognitive levels of the second language. (p.90)

Approaches to teach children English who speak a language other than English without supporting the home language, results in weakening of the child's cognitive, language and social abilities. (p.91)

2. Vitiello, Virginia E. (2013.) *Dual Language Learners and the CLASS™ Measure: Research and Recommendations*. Teachstone Training, LLC. Charlottesville, VA.

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (CLASS™) is a method for understanding, measuring, and improving teacher-child interactions (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008). It includes observational measures of teacher-child interactions and professional development supports to improve these interactions. The CLASS system was developed through research conducted at the University of Virginia, and has been used throughout the United States and abroad in classrooms serving children from 18 months to 18 years of age (e.g., Thomason & La Paro, 2009; Kane & Staiger, 2011).

This brief discusses the evidence surrounding the use of the CLASS measure in dual-language settings and provides recommendations for using it. The CLASS measure is rooted in research and theory that are broadly believed to be relevant across many world cultures: that relationships and interactions form the groundwork for social and cognitive development, that learning is socially-mediated, and that inquiry and drawing connections between concepts deepen students' learning (Pianta, 1999). Strong developmental science from the United States and abroad supports these principles (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

In 2011 nearly 20% of school age children spoke a language other than English at home, most often Spanish. Studies show that dual language learners tend to enter school with lower scores on cognitive and language assessments and leave school with lower educational attainment (Beltran, 2011; Gándara, 2010). They are more likely than other students to attend highly segregated, lower-quality schools (Gándara, 2010). At the same time, while dual language learners are a diverse group with highly variable needs, a challenge common to these students is to master new content while simultaneously learning English and adjusting to the cultural norms of the classroom (Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011;

Goldenberg, 2008). Meeting the needs of these children can be difficult for teachers, many of whom have not received adequate training in working with dual language learners (Beltran, 2011; Zepeda, Castro, & Cronin, 2011).

Educators and researchers have begun to identify specific strategies that can enhance the education of dual language learners, such as providing instruction in the child's first language and concentrating initially on vocabulary development (Calderón et al., 2011; Zepeda et al., 2011).

There is a growing consensus that dual language learners also benefit from the same fundamental experiences as monolingual students, including warm, supportive interactions with their teachers. Looking at social and emotional development, a study of diverse kindergartners found that the quality of teacher-child relationships was more strongly predictive of children's skills than was their status as dual language learners (Howes et al., 2011). Similarly, in designing an intervention to help teachers work more effectively with dual language learners, Buysse, Castro, and Peisner-Feinberg (2010) note that high-quality instruction, including effective teacher-student interactions, is critical for all children, especially those learning English as a second language.

Research on CLASS measures shows that scores predicted gains in children's language/literacy, math, social competence, and letter naming, as has been reported in previous studies (e.g., Mashburn et al., 2008) and that effects were the same for dual language learners and monolingual English speakers.

3. **Goode, 2005.** [Link not working, Michelle checking on this.](#) Self-Assessment Checklist – see items on this list. (Did the concl of this study find this checklist was working? - conclude here)

4. **Hannah Matthews. (2008.) *Supporting a Diverse and Culturally Competent Workforce: Charting Progress for Babies in Child Care Research-Based Rationale*. Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), Washington, DC.**

This paper explores the research-based rationale for recruiting and supporting diverse and culturally sensitive infant and toddler providers and caregivers, and provides recommendations for state policies on supporting these elements through the professional development of caregivers.

(Definition: Cultural competency requires a set of skills including (but not limited to) knowledge and understanding of cultures, diverse parenting practices, family values and customs, and dual language acquisition processes.)

Culture influences all aspects of child development; it is transformative and encompasses everything in a person's environment—including language, communication, beliefs, customs, practices, interactions, relationships, and behaviors. The development of babies and toddlers is rooted within a cultural context, as are the early care practices of parents and caregivers.

Research suggests that dual language learning—as early as the infant/toddler years—has long-term cognitive, academic, and social benefits. Bilingual child care environments, therefore, may offer the best opportunity for supporting babies' and toddlers' development of home and English language skills if their family's primary language is not English.

One study found greater attachment between toddlers and preschoolers entering child care and providers when they shared an ethnic background. Another found that an ethnic match between a young child and a caregiver is not related to social and cognitive outcomes for children; rather, high-quality care—care that is sensitive and responsive to the individual child—benefits all young children, regardless of the ethnic background of the person providing that care.

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, developmentally appropriate practices for young children should be informed by knowledge of young children's social and cultural contexts. Incorporating the home cultures and languages of babies and toddlers in child care settings—including the use of familiar music, materials, practices, and customs—can create positive early learning experiences; and this should be part of a planned curriculum or approach to working with babies and toddlers in child care settings. Additionally, babies' and toddlers' social, emotional, and cognitive development is enhanced through good partnerships between parents and those who care for their children.

Current research, coupled with the growing diversity of the infant/toddler population, suggests a need to increase the multilingual and multicultural capacity of the birth to three workforce. State policies and

practices can support this through multiple policy levers of licensing, subsidies, and quality enhancement initiatives that:

- Address diversity in core competencies and provide cultural training and technical assistance to infant/toddler providers.
- Create professional development ladders that include community-based training and education, and provide language access to licensing and professional development systems.
- Support quality initiatives for family, friends, and neighbor caregivers caring for diverse children.

5. Halgunseth, Linda. (2009.) Family Engagement, Diverse Families, and Early Childhood Education Programs: An Integrated Review of the Literature. Copyright © 2009 by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Washington, D.C. NAEYC.

A growing body of research suggests that meaningful engagement of families in their children's early learning supports school readiness and later academic success (Henrich & Gadaire, 2008; Weiss, Caspe, & Lopez, 2006). This article focuses on a strength-based perspective of family engagement rather than family involvement. A strength-based perspective recognizes that all families are involved in their children's learning and well-being in some way. The description of family engagement stems from the work of Henderson and Berla (1994), Epstein (2001), and Weiss, Caspe, and Lopez (2006). The following six components of early childhood education programs emphasize concepts that are continuous, reciprocal, and strength-based:

1. **Family participation** is encouraged in decision making related to their children's education.
2. **Two-way communication** is facilitated through multiple forms and is responsive to the language spoken by the family.
3. **Collaboration** and exchange of knowledge between programs and families.
4. **Sustained learning** is emphasized by programs and families at home and in the community that extend the teachings of the program.
5. **Family home environment** that values learning and supports programs.
6. **Dedicated and trained** teachers and program leadership that receive the supports they need to fully engage families.

Knowing what motivates families across all cultural and linguistic backgrounds to take part in their children's early education setting is crucial for early childhood educators who are seeking to raise their levels of engagement with the families. Practices that build the program-family partnership promote engagement and positive child outcomes in families across ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Attention to cultural sensitivity, the child's age, and the readiness level of family members and program staff are key elements to building this partnership.

Evidence suggests that educators can enhance family engagement by:

- Integrate culture and community
- Provide a welcoming environment
- Strive for program-family partnerships
- Make a commitment to outreach
- Provide family resources and referrals
- Set and reinforce program standards

6. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. (2012.) *2013 CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs—Preschool and Elementary School Edition*. Chicago, IL.

The CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) Guide provides a systematic framework for evaluating the quality of classroom-based SEL programs for preschool and elementary school settings. To be included in the *2013 CASEL Guide*, programs had to be well-designed classroom-based programs that systematically promote students' social and emotional competence, deliver high-quality training and other implementation supports, and be evidence-based documenting positive impacts on student development.

SEL programs are one of the most successful interventions to promote the positive development of students. Research findings from 213 controlled studies indicate that SEL programming improves students' academic achievement and positive social behavior while reducing their conduct problems and emotional distress (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011).

When school and district planning teams oversee the careful selection and effective implementation of evidence based social and emotional learning programs, the children they serve benefit socially,

emotionally, and academically. Research in social and emotional learning, and in child development more broadly, has consistently found that children learn best when education is relevant and appropriate to their cultural and linguistic context. The same is true with regard to materials and programming for families and caregivers.

Colleagues, parents, and students are the experts on the cultures and languages represented in the school or district. Suggested questions to ask related to a program's cultural and linguistic appropriateness include:

- How does the program ensure that the language, content, and activities are appropriate for the kind of community where participating schools are located?
- Has the program been evaluated with populations similar to the one in our school?
- Are there program evaluations that might provide additional information about the cultural and linguistic appropriateness of this program for different groups of students?
- Are there schools using the program in communities similar to ours in terms of culture and languages? Can the program provider identify contacts in those schools?

6. Porter, T., Bromer, J., & Moodie, S. (2011). *Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) and Family-Sensitive Caregiving in Early Care and Education Arrangements: Promising Directions and Challenges, Research-to-Policy, Research-to-Practice Brief*. OPRE 2011-11d. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

There are several conceptual models for family-provider partnerships in early childhood education. They include family engagement, family support and family-centered care, and family-sensitive care.

This brief aims to inform discussions about relevant and meaningful indicators by examining QRIS family partnership standards through the lens of one of these conceptual models, specifically, the model of family-sensitive caregiving.

Of the few studies that examine family involvement and outcomes for children in early care and education, some Head Start and Early Head Start evaluations of parent involvement initiatives have found an association between parent involvement and improved cognitive, language and social-

emotional development. Studies suggest that strong family-provider relationships are associated with positive child outcomes in areas such as school readiness and social skills.

Research also shows that strong relationships are associated with positive parent outcomes such as improved mental health, enhanced parent-child relationships, and fewer work-family conflicts. Finally, strong family-provider relationships have been shown to be associated with more sensitive caregiving and higher quality care in early care and education settings.

7. Charles Bruner, Aisha Ray, Michelle Stover Wright and Abby Copeman. (2009.) *Quality Rating Improvement Systems for a Multi-Ethnic Society*

<http://www.buildinitiative.org/WhatsNew/ViewArticle/tabid/96/smId/412/ArticleID/181/Default.aspx>.

This brief examines the Role of Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS) in Promoting Quality in Early Childhood Programs. As states develop QRIS, they need to ensure that these systems are part of an overall set of policies, regulations, and practices that supports quality and gives express attention to issues of race, language, and culture. As states mature in their QRIS development and implementation, QRIS are increasingly being seen as a framework for a larger early childhood system. *Therefore, ensuring that QRIS place value on including issues of race, language and culture has importance to the cultural and language responsiveness of the larger system.*

Quality programs that serve children who are English-language learners as well as English-only children build upon the assets of having children and families speaking other languages at home in developing both teaching and play opportunities that involve these other languages.

A 2008 study by the Child and Family Policy Center (CFPC) found that most state QRIS systems do not include significant culturally- and linguistically-competent responses to race, language, and culture as an aspect of program quality. The lack of knowledge of the relationship between cultural competence and quality programs, confusion about what is desirable, uncertainty of goals for incorporating culture in curriculum, influences of different accreditation bodies, and political contexts, are some barriers to including cultural components in QRIS.

Respondents to the study were receptive to re-examining their QRIS to refine and improve upon them to be more responsive to issues of culture, language, and race. Doing so would require:

- Establishing a process that would bring expertise together that could reach some consensus across diverse groups in their state;
- Maintaining simplicity in the overall QRIS for ease of administration; and
- Ensuring accuracy and connections to an evidence base in any elements that were added or modified.

As QRIS increasingly is used in states, it is important that program “quality” not be seen as separate and distinct from “quality of recognition and response to race, culture and language.” The broader the range of stakeholders who are enlisted to review the QRIS from a language, cultural, racial, and gender perspective, the more understanding and support for changes there will be. Additionally, since QRIS are an important driver of larger system reform, the more emphasis placed on creating multicultural and cultural responsive classrooms, the more likely formal education and in-service professional development systems will respond by including them in their curriculum.